

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Velázquez Speaks Out Against FY 2004 Budget

Budget cuts billions in programs that are important to New Yorkers

At a recent press conference, Congresswoman Velázquez spoke out against the federal budget for 2004. The Republican backed budget slashed important domestic programs in New York by almost \$19 billion over the next decade.

"The budget is all about priorities, which are sadly misplaced in this case," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "President Bush and many Republicans in Congress support a \$726 billion tax cut that benefits the wealthiest 1% of Americans. At the same time they cut billions in New York services and benefits aimed at low-income families. It is an outrage that tax cuts for the wealthy will come at the expense of important programs to help working families."

The budget calls for \$12.7 billion in cuts over 10 years to the Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Medicaid helps countless and needy New York City residents afford health care coverage.

The budget also cuts over \$4 million from Child Nutrition programs and more than \$1 billion has been cut over the next 10 years in the New York food stamp program.



Congresswoman Velázquez and her colleagues speak out against the cuts in the federal budget for 2004.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "There were more than 25 programs to aid small businesses that were cut or terminated, as well as those that protect our environment and help our veterans."

Push for \$11.4 Million in Funding

Velázquez asks for funding of local transportation projects

Congresswoman Velázquez has requested \$10 million in funding for the Sunset Park Bush Terminal Access Improvement project and \$1.4 million for the Red Hook Improvement project.

The Sunset Park Bush Terminal Access Improvement project would improve the Sunset Park waterfront. The planning, design and construction would include the development of esplanades and bikeways, boat and ferry landings, open space, signage and railroad crossing safety improvements.

The Red Hook Improvement project is comprised of two parts which would improve safety, air-quality and access for residents of and visitors to Red Hook. This project would first plan and implement part of a waterfront greenway, bikeway, and streetscape. Secondly, the project would undertake a comprehensive transportation study of the Red Hook area including a light-rail

analysis and an assessment of the impact of anticipated development. There will be a community planning process to integrate these elements into an overall plan that coordinates with a larger Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway.

"I am very hopeful that these projects, totaling \$11.4 million, will be funded to improve traffic conditions and the quality of life of residents in my district," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The safety and viability of our transportation systems is a determinant for the safety and viability of our communities."

The funding was requested through the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21), a congressional bill that seeks to address infrastructure issues, including growing traffic congestion, in an environmentally-sound manner.

NY Women's Chamber of Commerce

The New York Women's Chamber of Commerce (NYWCC) recently held its launch event and Congresswoman Velázquez was the keynote speaker.

"I believe the economic growth among women has allowed them to gain greater control over their destinies by breaking through the glass ceiling," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "It is impossible to ignore that business ownership has provided women with an enormous sense of empowerment."

Velázquez addressed the audience on the future of women-owned businesses and what Congress is doing to help them.

"I assure you we will see the day when businesses are not viewed by who owns them, but rather stand on their success alone," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Until that day comes, we will continue our fight. As the future of the American economy, you are worth it."

Congresswoman Velázquez is working in Washington for women-owned businesses in New York City to provide them with regulatory and tax relief, more affordable health care options and federal contracting opportunities, and better access to sources of capital to promote start-ups and growth.

The NYWCC is the first of its kind in this area. It is a private not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of women in the New York area by fostering economic, leadership, and professional development through targeted programs and services.



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks at the launch event for the NY Women's Chamber of Commerce.

Velázquez Opposes Proposed OEM Location

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez, along with her NYC Congressional colleagues, issued a joint letter expressing their opposition to the proposed siting of the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) headquarters at the Old Red Cross building in downtown Brooklyn.

The main concern of the letter was the proposed location, in Brooklyn's hub where there is a concentration of potential terrorist targets, which would endanger lives and limit the effectiveness of OEM.

The previous OEM headquarters was located in the World Trade Center complex, and was destroyed in the September 11 terrorist attacks.

"While this could not have been foreseen, locating OEM at a known terrorist target was an unfortunate miscalculation," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Clearly we do not want to make the same mistake again. We would like the opportunity to meet and discuss these plans with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which provides funding for the city's preparedness, in order to address these concerns and provide our input."

The proposed OEM site is next to the entrance of the Brooklyn Bridge, above a subway tunnel, and behind the United States Courthouse, the new Federal Courthouse and the U.S. Post Office -- all known potential terrorist targets. The site also adjoins neighborhoods that include 15 and 16 story residential apartment complexes and schools and universities, as Brooklyn's main hotel.

The United States Marshalls Service (USMS), which presently maintains an actively patrolled perimeter encircling the federal court complex, studied the problem and reported their findings to the Board of Judges that voted unanimously to oppose OEM being located at this site.

"We support OEM's work and FEMA's commitment to New York City, however we oppose the proposed location for OEM," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "We are surprised that out of more than twenty explored locations, this site was selected despite the fact that it is in a known terrorist target area. It would defeat the purpose of OEM's work to have a major emergency center located in such a high-risk area."

TOP Program Will Help Bridge Digital Divide

The Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) is one of the only federal programs solely dedicated to providing assistance to libraries, community centers, after-school programs, and other local organizations by offering underserved populations access to information technology and training. TOP is a highly competitive grant program funded through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration at the Department of Commerce.

Funding for TOP was eliminated in President Bush's latest budget. Congresswoman Velázquez is working to get this money restored.

"TOP is critical to community development, and is an important investment in our nation's future economic prosperity," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Technology literacy has become a basic life skill that is vital to educational, economic, social and civic achievement. TOP provides underserved populations with valuable access to information technology and training. Many residents in my district benefit from this program and I hope that this request will be met."

The program is responsible for extending and improving the delivery of valuable services and opportunities to all Americans. Between 1995 and 2002, almost \$13 million was given to New York through the TOP program.